

IN THE ABSTRACT OF DISCLOSURE:

Please amend the Abstract as follows:

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

~~A first area separating unit scans~~ method of image compression includes scanning bit map data in ~~the~~ a main scanning direction and ~~separates~~ separating it into an area including black pixels and an area including no black pixel. ~~A first encoding unit encodes~~ encoding the area including no black pixel ~~obtained by the first area separating unit.~~ ~~A second area separating unit scans,~~ scanning the ~~a~~ logic row including the black pixels ~~separated by the first area separating unit in the sub-scanning direction and separates~~ separating it into an area including black pixels and an area including no black pixel on a column unit basis. ~~A second encoding unit encodes,~~ encoding the area including the black pixels ~~which was separated by the second area separating unit and in which the number of continuous columns is equal to or more than 2.~~ ~~A third area separating unit separates,~~ separating an area which coincides with a predetermined reference pattern in which the number of columns is equal to 1 from the areas which were not encoded by the second encoding unit. ~~A third encoding unit encodes,~~ and encoding an ~~the~~ area which coincides with the reference pattern and was separated ~~by the third area separating unit.~~